

Remarks at a Republican National Committee Dinner

May 14, 2002

Thank you for that great welcome. I'm honored. I'm glad I heard the second introduction. *[Laughter]* You know, when I asked Marc to become the party chairman, I knew he was going to do a great job, and he hasn't let me down. Mr. Chairman, thank you for your leadership. I appreciate that.

I want to thank Marc, and I want to thank Ann Wagner. I want to thank Marie-Josee; thank you very much for doing this. I appreciate your leadership. I'm honored that Lew Eisenberg agreed to serve as the finance chairman of our grand party. Lew, thank you for your leadership as well. I want to thank all who made this dinner possible. I particularly want to thank you all for being here tonight.

I've been blessed by a lot of things. I've been blessed by a great group of friends, many of whom are here, and I want to thank you for coming. And the country realizes now I've been blessed with a great wife. I am sure glad she said yes when I said, "Will you marry me?" *[Laughter]* As you know, a lot of her friends are still confused as to why she said yes. *[Laughter]* But I wish she was here tonight. She's in Paris, and I don't mean Paris, Texas. *[Laughter]* She is in Paris, France. The French are getting to see what America knows, that our First Lady is calm and steady and dignified and is a great First Lady for the United States.

I see out there many of the members of my team, and I've been blessed with a great team. I want to thank my Cabinet officials who are here tonight. I particularly want to say one word about a member of my team who isn't here; I understand he spoke at lunch. Somebody said to me one time, he said, "Well, Dick Cheney is going to be a good Vice President." No, Dick Cheney is a great Vice President for the United States.

I want to thank the Speaker. Mr. Speaker—where is Mr. Speaker? Somewhere down there. Hi, Speaker. The Speaker of the House is a fabulous Speaker of the House. And one of the things I'm going to dedicate myself to is to make sure he remains the Speaker of the House.

And I've got another job, too, as the leader of this party, and it's to make sure that Trent Lott becomes the majority leader of the United States Senate. I look out there and see many of the fine Members of the United States Congress, Tom DeLay and others. I want to thank you all for being here. Thank you for supporting our great party. Thank you for your leadership, and thanks for working with your President.

I also want to thank all the folks who do the grassroots work for the Republican Party. Those of us who have ever run for office know full well how important it is to have people who are willing to man the phones and to stuff the envelopes, to carry the signs, to stand on the street corners, to do all the work necessary. And so, on behalf of a grateful group of elected officials, thank you for your hard work on behalf of our candidacies and our philosophy.

You know, it doesn't seem like a year ago that I was here. Time is flying. Either that's because I've got a lot to do, or I'm enjoying myself. *[Laughter]* The truth is, both are the reasons why time is flying. I do have a lot to do. But I can't tell you how much I love being your President, and thank you for the opportunity to serve this great Nation.

A year ago I said that I would do my part to try to change the tone in Washington, DC, to get rid of the needless name-calling that tends to go on here, to try to focus on what's best for America, to bring a philosophy which is conservative and yet compassionate, to not listen to the voices that try to tear people down but to lift this Nation up, and to focus on getting things done. And I believe—and I strongly believe—that we've made great progress. I feel just as strongly today as I did a year ago about the need for the American people to learn that when our philosophy is put into action, people are better off, and that when they give us a chance to lead, we lead by focusing on results. And I want to talk about some of those results here tonight.

First, I had the honor of signing the largest tax reduction in years. That tax reduction reflected two things: One, we Republicans understand that we're not spending the Government's money. It's the people's money, and we've got to let the people keep more

of their own money in order to keep our economy growing. And secondly, that tax relief came at the right time.

Some of them up here read a different economic textbook than we do. They thought that it made sense to take more money out of the pockets of the hard-working taxpayers if the economy were to slow down. We think just the opposite. We think, when the economy slows down, you give people more of their own money so they can spend. And when they spend on goods and services, somebody provides the goods and services. And when somebody provides goods and services, it means work for American people. This tax relief was the right thing for the taxpayers, and it's the right thing for the economy of the United States.

And I look forward to working with the United States Congress to make sure that the tax relief we passed is permanent, is long-lasting, is real for the American taxpayer.

At the same time, I worked with Members on both sides of our aisle to provide an economic stimulus package, just when the country needed it. And I want to thank the leaders here who worked with the White House, who understands that when we encourage investment in the private sector, it is more likely to lead to work for the American people.

I want to thank the people here who helped me work on education reform. There's nothing more important than making sure that every child in America gets educated. I don't mean a few; I don't mean some who live in certain neighborhoods; I mean every single child in this country.

We passed a bill that sets high standards. You see, we understand that if you set low standards, if you don't believe people can learn, people won't learn. See, ours is the party that looks at each individual and says, he or she matters, and he or she can learn. And we set high standards.

Ours is also the party that believes in results. Listen, if we spend Federal money—which we do—on disadvantaged children, we want to know. We expect results. We expect the children to learn to read and write and add and subtract. See, we believe every child can learn.

So part of the reform package said that if you get help, you must show us—you, the

States and local jurisdictions, must show us. And if children will learn, listen, we'll praise all day long the teachers who are working hard to make that happen. But when we find children trapped in schools that will not teach and will not change, we demand something else. No child should be stuck in a school that won't teach.

And finally, the core component of the education bill recognizes that we don't know all—everything here in Washington. And so we passed power out of Washington to empower local people, to empower people closest to the children, to chart the path to excellence for each child. No, this education reform is an important piece of legislation. It's conservative to trust local people; it is compassionate—it is compassionate to insist that every single child in America get a quality education.

And when Dick Cheney and I came to Washington, we said we'd make sure our defense and defenses of the United States were strong. And we have done that. The morale in the United States military is high. Our folks are being trained, and they're being well equipped. And our Nation is better off for a strong defense policy that we support.

We've made progress on key issues—key issues—like trade. I want to thank the House of Representatives for getting a good trade bill out of the House. And it's now up to the United States Senate to get a trade bill to my desk. It is important to open up markets for U.S. products.

We passed an energy bill. For the first time, our Nation had an administration that was willing to stand up and say we need an energy policy, a policy which encourages conservation and new technologies for renewal but also a policy that understands it's not in our Nation's interest to be dependent on foreign sources of crude oil, particularly when some of those foreign sources of crude oil don't like us.

One of my passions, one of my legislative passions, is to encourage programs based upon faith and programs based upon love to flourish all across America. The House of Representatives passed a important piece of legislation called the Faith-Based Initiative. It is stuck in the Senate. It is time to get this important legislation out of the United

States Senate and on my desk, so we can capture and rally the great compassion all across America, to make sure nobody in America feels left out of this great country.

And there are issues we're working on. There is no more important an issue for the President than to be able to name and nominate judges. I want you to know that this country has got a vacancy crisis on the Federal bench, and that's not good for America. That's not good for America. I've worked hard to name well-qualified jurists, people from all walks of life, people who have done different things in their life, different occupations, but all of them great judges. And I can't get the politics of the United States Senate to be set aside for the good of the judiciary. One reason we need to change the Senate is to make sure the well-qualified judges I have named and nominated get approved to the benches all across America.

We're working on an early childhood development program. We want our Head Start programs to be able to teach our children the basics of reading and writing and math. If we're going to measure, we want little kids from all walks of life at the same starting point as other kids. This is essential, that we get good legislation out of the Congress that focuses on making sure every child learns to read. There's nothing more basic and nothing more important for the future of this country.

We're working on a welfare reform package. One of the great success stories was the welfare reform of 1996. The welfare rolls in America are down by over one-half. And that's good for taxpayers, but more importantly, it's good for the people who've found work. A job for a family means dignity, and we must continue the reform of making sure we help people find work in America.

And one of the interesting debates going on in Washington, which amazes some people—I know it amazes the people in Crawford, Texas—is, I think a crucial component of a good welfare reauthorization bill is to encourage people to marry and stay married, to encourage families—two-parent families. The statistics show that when there's a mom and dad together, a child is more likely to succeed in America. And I'm proud to strongly support family initiatives all across

this country. No, there's a lot to work on here for the good of the people.

Another thing we're going to be working on is the budget. I was in Chicago in 2002; some guy said—a reporter said, excuse me, said—[*laughter*]*—a male reporter said—[laughter]*—“Would you ever allow a deficit?” I said, “Only if we're at war or only if the Nation were in recession or only if we had a national emergency would I allow a deficit.” Well, this administration got all three. And we're going to have a deficit because our economy isn't generating the tax revenues that we thought. That will be okay after a while. We'll have a small deficit if Congress adheres to the budget I submitted. But I wanted you to know how I feel about it.

My most important job is to protect the American people. And one of the reasons we have a short-term deficit is because I've insisted that we fund our national defense to the fullest.

My most important job is to protect innocent lives, is to secure our homeland, is to do everything we can to make sure the enemy doesn't hit us again. I want you to know that the defense of our country, protecting the homeland, I don't view as a partisan issue. I view it as my duty. And I view it as the duty of the United States Congress to work with the President, which is what's happening.

I wish I could report to you that the enemy is defeated, that they no longer are interested in hurting us, but that's not the case. They're still moving around. A lot of kids say and write letters in and say, you know, “Why? Why would they want to come after America?” It's hard for people to understand, but these coldblooded killers hate what we stand for. They hate our love for freedom. They hate the fact that America believes strongly in the freedom for people to worship the way they see fit, the people for—the freedom for people to speak their mind, the freedom of the press. The freedoms we hold dear are hated by these people.

I like to remind my fellow Americans that we're a unique land, that we're plenty tough. And I guess they just didn't understand us. They must have thought that we were so materialistic and shallow and feeble that, oh,

yeah, we might file a couple of lawsuits—*[laughter]*—but that we wouldn't do anything else. Thanks to the mighty United States military and a vast coalition of freedom-loving countries, we've proved them wrong.

And we're going to continue to prove them wrong, because this Nation is a united Nation; we're together. We're also patient. I've been so pleased and thankful that the American people have been so patient in the understanding of the task ahead. They don't have—like me, they don't have a calendar on the wall that says, by such-and-such a date we're going to quit. They understand that we're facing an enemy that we have never really seen before—a faceless, nameless bunch of people who—they've got leaders who say to the youngsters, "Go blow yourself up, and in the meantime, I'm going to find a cave to hide in." A different kind of enemy.

But we're learning more about them. You need to know that our intelligence-gathering is getting better; we're sharing a lot of intelligence with our friends. And we're going to run them down, one by one, and bring them to justice.

History has called us into action. History has laid a significant responsibility on this Nation's shoulders, our collective shoulders. And I'm proud to report to my friends and proud to report to the world that we accept that responsibility.

That's why the defense budget I submitted is significant. It has two principles involved in it: One, anytime we commit our young men and women in harm's way, they deserve the best pay, the best equipment, and the best training.

And the second message is to not only our friends but our enemies: We're in this for the long haul. We're in it until we secure our own homeland. See, we fight for freedom, and when somebody comes after our freedom, this mighty Nation is plenty tough. This mighty Nation will not relent in the face of people who think that we will back down.

We've got a lot of work ahead of us. We've got work ahead of us in Afghanistan, and we're after them. We're going to continue to work to make sure that the Al Qaida killers aren't able to bunch up or train in other spots of the world. We're making good progress there. We're cutting off their money.

But there's some larger tasks ahead as well. We just cannot, as a nation that loves freedom, allow the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us or to team up with Al Qaida to threaten us with the world's most dangerous weapons.

History is going to look back at this time, and people are going to say, "Did the United States have the courage to lead, or did the United States blink?" And I'm here to report to you that history will say that the United States of America led the world to freedom.

I'm an incredibly optimistic person. I believe that there's some incredible good that's going to come out of this evil. I want you to know that I talk about our military, and I talk about "getting them" in caves, but I long for peace. You see, I know that by being tough and strong and resolute, we can achieve peace. And that's what I—that's my hope and my goal. And I believe it's going to happen. I believe when the United States leads the world, we're more likely to achieve peace in troubled regions and peace around the world.

And out of the evil is going to come some good at home, too; you mark my words. This country is so compassionate, so decent that we will be able to address the pockets of despair and hopelessness which exist in cities and communities around our country, not by vast new Government programs but by the love of the American people.

People say, what can they do to help to fight in the war against terror? And my answer is, love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. If you're interested in fighting evil, do some good. The acts don't have to be hugely significant. Mentor one child as a part of doing some good. If you've got a shut-in in your neighborhood, walk across the street on a daily basis and say, "What can I do to help you?" That's part of doing good. If you go to church or a synagogue or a mosque, rally your fellow citizens to feed somebody who is hungry. Find a child whose parent might be in a prison and surround him with love.

And that's happening in America. See, the strength of America is not in our halls of Government; the strength of America is in the hearts and souls of incredibly decent and generous and kind people. There's a spirit

in this country that I can feel, that's alive and well, a spirit that on the one hand says, we'll defend our freedoms, and a spirit on the other hand that says, not only will we make the world safer, we will make America better.

It has been an honor to serve as the President of this great country. I'm an early morning guy. I love getting up in the morning and bringing the First Lady her coffee. I love taking Spot and Barney down the elevator and heading out into the South Lawn. Barney heads off with the gardener, because the rug in the Oval Office is new and he's quite young. *[Laughter]* Spot goes in with me. After all, she was born in the White House during the "41" era and is quite used to the accommodations. *[Laughter]*

I sit behind a fantastic desk that has been used by Theodore Roosevelt—I'm a President; I call him Ted—*[laughter]*—Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, the great Ronald Reagan. I look at Abraham Lincoln on the wall, and I put him on the wall there because he had the toughest job of all, which was to keep our Nation united in the face of a civil war. I know my job: My job is to keep our Nation united so that we can capture the great spirit of America, to make sure that everybody who lives in this country understands our promise, our values, and our hope. That's my dream for the world—peace—and our country being as hopeful for everyone as it can possibly be.

Thank you for giving me the chance to be the President. May God bless you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:50 p.m. at the Washington Convention Center. In his remarks, he referred to Marc Racicot, chairman, Ann Wagner, cochairman, and Lewis Eisenberg, finance chairman, Republican National Committee; and Marie-Josée Kravis, dinner chairman.

Remarks at the Peace Officers Memorial Service

May 15, 2002

Thank you very much. Thank you all. Please be seated. Thank you for that kind welcome, and thank you for the privilege of joining you today at this annual tribute.

Today and every May 15th the American flag flies at half-staff in grateful memory—in grateful memory—of thousands of fallen police officers. This year we pay special homage to 480 men and women whose names are being added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. We do so with enormous respect and appreciation for the courage and character of all who have answered the call to be a law enforcement officer.

I want to thank my friend Steve Young, the president of the FOP, for inviting me to be here, and I want to thank him for his leadership. I want to thank members of my Cabinet who are here. I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who have joined us on the stage and who are here with us as well. Thank you all for coming.

I appreciate Aliza Clark and those who work so hard to help the families of the fallen. I want to thank the United States Capitol Police, Vernon Baker. I want to thank Daniel Rodriguez for lending his fabulous voice in tribute after tribute to the greatness of America. And I want to thank Marc Anthony as well.

So many family members of fallen officers have come to Washington for this service, and I want you to know we are honored by your presence. Standing by you today and always are brother and sister officers who are faithful to the memory of lost friends.

I thank all the officers in attendance and the departments you represent. Thank you for your loyalty to one another and for your service to America. The loyalty of police officers is seen in the neighborhoods of America when our officers are on duty and whenever one of your comrades is suddenly taken from us. That happens on average about three times a week in the life of our Nation, and each time we witness the powerful family that unites the police officers of America. When an officer dies in the line of duty, an entire community will pause in sorrow and in admiration with the depth of feeling Americans reserve for people who protect us every day.

Last September the 11th, our entire Nation grieved at the loss of 72 police officers. It was a loss unlike any we have known before, all in one moment, all at one place.